

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BRUSSE 03105 01 OF 04 301240Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 SS-15 SP-02 PER-01 SIG-01
A-01 MMO-01 EB-08 SCA-01 IO-13 INR-07 PM-04 CU-02
AGRE-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 FEAE-00
NSC-05 TRSE-00 USIA-06 /092 W
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R 301107Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9457
INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BERN
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY VIENNA
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS
USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 4 BRUSSELS 03105

E.O. 11652: GDS
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CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BRUSSE 03105 01 OF 04 301240Z

SUBJECT: PARM - ANNUAL POLICY AND RESOURCES ASSESSMENT - PART I

REF: (A) STATE 38356; (B) STATE 41169

INTERESTS AND OVERVIEW.

1. AMERICAN INTERESTS HERE WILL BE WELL-SERVED IF, AS I EXPECT,

BELGIAN DEVELOPMENTS AND POLICIES CONTINUE TO FOLLOW THE MAIN LINES OF THE POST-WAR PATTERN.

2. BELGIUM, DIVIDED LINGUISTICALLY AND UNDERGOING FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES, IS NONETHELESS A DURABLE DEMOCRACY. BELGIAN LAWS AND INSTITUTIONS PROMOTE THE COMMON GOOD AND PROTECT INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY. PRAGMATIC AND DIRECT, BELGIANS ARE ADVERSE TO EXTREMES AND HAVE A WELL-DEVELOPED TALENT FOR COMPROMISE. THE BELGIAN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL STRUCTURE IS SUFFICIENTLY FLEXIBLE TO ACCOMMODATE CHANGE.

3. BELGIUM, AFTER TWICE TASTING THE ASHES OF NEUTRALITY, IS A STAUNCH ALLY BOUND TO NATO AND THE COMMON DEFENSE. BELGIUM HAS COMMITTED IMPORTANT MILITARY UNITS TO NATO AND PARTICIPATES IN THE UNIFIED COMMAND STRUCTURE OF SHAPE. BELGIUM TAKES AN ACTIVE PART IN THE ALLIED CONSULTATIVE PROCESS IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL AND ITS SUBORDINATE COMMITTEES.

4. REALIZING THAT THEIR FATE LIES BEYOND THEIR BORDERS, BELGIANS PROMOTE GREATER EUROPEAN UNITY AND BROADER INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION. THEY WORK TO EXTEND THE AREA AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF COMMON POLICIES AND TO STRENGTHEN THE INSTITUTIONS OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY. AT THE SAME TIME, BELGIUM SEEKS FULLER COOPERATION WITH THE REST OF THE WORLD, ESPECIALLY THE OTHER MAJOR INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES, BILATERALLY AND IN THE UN, UMF, GATT, OECD, AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BRUSSE 03105 01 OF 04 301240Z

5. ECONOMIC DECISIONS ARE MADE MAINLY IN THE MARKET PLACE. BELGIANS ARE COMMITTED TO AN OPEN TRADING AND INVESTING SYSTEM. BELGIUM IS A MAJOR MARKET FOR AMERICAN EXPORTS AND ATTRACTS LARGE AMOUNTS OF AMERICAN INVESTMENT. OVER A THOUSAND AMERICAN FIRMS HAVE SUBSIDIARIES HERE.

6. WITH VALUES SIMILAR TO OURS, BELGIANS ARE RECEPTIVE

TO AMERICAN IDEAS. AMERICAN INTELLECTUAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCE IS WIDESPREAD. INTERESTS IN AMERICAN EVENTS AND POLICIES IS HIGH.

7. ALTHOUGH BELGIUM IS ESSENTIALLY STABLE, THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL STRUCTURES ARE UNDERGOING CONSIDERABLE CHANGE. UNTIL RECENTLY, THE FRENCH-SPEAKING WALLOONS IN THE SOUTH DOMINATED BELGIUM POLITICALLY, ECONOMICALLY, AND SOCIALLY. TRADITIONALLY, THE WALLOONS

REGARDED THE DUTCH-SPEAKING POPULATION IN THE NORTH AS HEWERS OF WOOD AND DRAWERS OF WATER. THIS PATTERN IS BEING MODIFIED RAPIDLY, DUE LARGELY TO POST-WAR DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC TRENDS. TODAY THE FLEMINGS MAKE UP NEARLY 60 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION AND CONTROL AN INCREASINGLY LARGE SHARE OF BELGIAN INDUSTRY. CONSEQUENTLY, THE CENTER OF POLITICAL POWER HAS SHIFTED TO FLANDERS. THE FLEMINGS HAVE COME TO POWER AND ARE LIKELY TO CONTINUE TO DOMINATE FUTURE GOVERNMENTS. SOCIAL CHANGES ARE FLOWING UNEVENLY BUT INEVITABLY. THESE SHIFTS IN THE RELATIVE POSITIONS OF THE TWO LINGUISTIC GROUPS RESULT IN TENSIONS THAT SIFT INTO EVERY CORNER OF LIFE IN BELGIUM AND INTRUDE INTO EVERY IMPORTANT DOMESTIC POLICY ISSUE.

8. TO REFLECT THESE CHANGES, BELGIANS ARE IN THE PROCESS OF DETERMINING HOW THEY WILL MOVE POLITICALLY FROM A CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 BRUSSE 03105 01 OF 04 301240Z

UNITARY TO A FEDERALIST NATION. THIS DEBATE IS THE CENTRAL FEATURE OF BELGIAN POLITICAL LIFE. HOW THE DEBATE IS CONDUCTED AND HOW IT WILL BE RESOLVED IS OF VITAL IMPORTANCE TO ALL BELGIANS. THE TWO LINGUISTIC GROUPS AND THE VARIOUS POLITICAL GROUPS WITHIN EACH ARE MANEUVERING TO DEFINE A FEDERAL STRUCTURE TO THEIR BENEFIT.

9. OTHER CHANGES ARE IN THE MAKING. THE LONG ECONOMIC RECESSION HAS EXPOSED SERIOUS INDUSTRIAL PROBLEMS. SOME OF BELGIAN INDUSTRY-STEEL, GLASS, TEXTILES--HAVE OUTMODED POANT AND EQUIPMENT AND HIGH COSTS. BELGIANS PERCEIVE THE NEED FOR A NEW INDUSTRIAL POLICY TO PROVIDE INCENTIVES FOR SHIFTING RESOURCES TO HIGHER TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRIES. THE PROLONGED ECONOMIC SLUMP ALSO LAID BARE SOME LATENT CLASS TENSIONS. THOSE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STRUCTURE ARE EXPRESSING A DEGREE OF DISSATISFACTION WITH THE RESPONSIVENESS OF THE SYSTEM TO THEIR NEEDS AND WANTS.

CONFIDENTIAL

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CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BRUSSE 03105 02 OF 04 301327Z

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 SS-15 SP-02 PER-01 SIG-01
A-01 MMO-01 EB-08 SCA-01 IO-13 INR-07 PM-04 CU-02
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R 301107Z MAR 77
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9458
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AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BERN
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
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AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
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AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY VIENNA
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS
USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 4 BRUSSELS 03105

10. THUS, TENSION AND CHANGE ARE INCREASINGLY EVIDENT
IN BELGIUM. HOWEVER, THE UNDERLYING COMMITMENT TO
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BRUSSE 03105 02 OF 04 301327Z

DEMOCRACY AND TRADITIONAL VALUES IS STRONG. IT IS
UNLIKELY THAT CHANGES WILL TAKE PLACE ABRUPTLY OR
VIOLENTLY. THE STRUCTURE OF LIFE AND THE SHAPE OF
INSTITUTIONS WILL EVOLVE WITHIN A STABLE FRAMEWORK.

11. IN THIS ESSENTIALLY STABLE BUT SHIFTING
ATMOSPHERE, BELGIANS WILL GO TO THE POLLS ON APRIL 17
TO CHOOSE A NEW GOVERNMENT. IN MY OPINION, THE MOST
PROBABLE OUTCOME IS A STRENGTHENING OF THE FLEMISH
CHRISTIAN PARTY, THE WALLOON SOCIALIST PARTY, AND, IN
BRUSSELS, THE FDF. THESE DEVELOPMENTS WILL ACCENTUATE

THE REGIONALIZATION AND RADICALIZATION OF DOMESTIC POLITICS. THE NEXT GOVERNMENT MAY WELL BE A COALITION BUILT AROUND THE TWO MAJOR PARTIES, THE CHRISTIANS AND THE SOCIALISTS.

12. SUCH A GOVERNMENT PROBABLY WOULD BE A BIT LEFT OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT ON DOMESTIC ISSUES. BELGIAN FOREIGN POLICY IS UNLIKELY TO CHANGE IN ANY IMPORTANT RESPECT.

POLICY ISSUES: GENERAL

13. THERE ARE TWO MAIN STREAMS OF BELGIAN FOREIGN POLICY: EUROPEAN AND ATLANTIC. BELGIANS SEE THAT THEIR ECONOMIC WELL-BEING AND POLITICAL FUTURE ARE INDIVISAIBLY LINKED TO THEIR NEIGHBORS AND THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY. BELGIANS ALSO KNOW THAT THEIR DEFENSE IS ULTIMATELY DEPENDENT ON THE UNITED STATES AND THAT MANY PRESSING PROBLEMS CAN BE SOLVED SATISFACTORILY ONLY IN COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED STATES. THEY SEE NO INCONSISTENCY IN THE CONCOMITANT COMMITMENT TO THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY AND BROADER ATLANTIC COOPERATION.

14. AS WE, TOO, WISH TO ENCOURAGE THE PARALLEL DEVELOPMENT OF EUROPEAN UNITY AND ATLANTIC COOPERATION, CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BRUSSE 03105 02 OF 04 301327Z

THE MAIN LINES OF AMERICAN AND BELGIAN POLICY ARE ENTIRELY COMPATIBLE. HOWEVER, IN PUSHING PARTICULAR PROGRAMS, WE SHOULD NOT FORCE BELGIUM TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THE US AND EUROPE UNLESS WE HAVE DECIDED THAT THE SPECIFIC BENEFIT WILL EXCEED THE GENERAL COST. WHENEVER POSSIBLE WE SHOULD EXPLOT THE BELGIAN INCLINATION TO DEVISE SOLUTIONS ACCEPTABLE TO BOTH AMERICA AND EUROPE.

15. BELGIANS RECOGNIZE AND ACCEPT THE UNITED STATES AS THE LEADER OF THE WESTERN WORLD. THEY GENERALLY FOLLOW OUR LEAD BUT WITH AVRYING DEGREES OF ENTHUSIASM AND EFFECTIVENESS, DEPENDING ON THE CONTENT OF OUR POLICY AND THE NATURE OF OUR APPROACH. IN MY JUDGMENT, BELGIAN RESPONSIVENESS TO AMERICAN INITIATIVES IS LIKELY TO BE GREATER TO THE EXTENT WE:

-- LEAD PRIMARILY BY EXAMPLE RATHER THAN EXHORTATION. IT DOES LITTLE GOOD, FOR EXAMPLE, TO URGE OUR FRIENDS AND ALLIES TO ADOPT ENERGY POLICES WHEN WE DO NOT HAVE ONE.

-- DELIVER ON OUR PROMISES. THE FIELD OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IS STREWN WITH THE WRECKAGE OF PROJECTS PROPOSED BY THE UNITED STATES AND

SUBSEQUENTLY ABANDONED. THE FAILURE OF THE US TO RATIFY THE OECD FINANCIAL SAFETY NET AND THE CHEMICAL AGREEMENT OF THE KENNEDY ROUND ARE EXAMPLES BELGIANS STILL THROW AT US.

-- APPROACH PROBLEMS MULTILATERALLY AND NOT BILATERALLY. BELGIANS NORMALLY FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE DEALING WITH THE UNITED STATES WHEN OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES ARE ALSO INVOLVED. THE TASK OF EXPLAINING ANY PARTICULAR FOREIGN POLICY COURSE TO THE BELGIAN PARLIAMENT IS FACILITATED IF THE GOVERNMENT CAN SHOW THAT BELGIUM'S EUROPEAN NEIGHBORS ARE ALSO GOING IN THE SAME DIRECTION.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 BRUSSE 03105 02 OF 04 301327Z

--CONSULT FREQUENTLY AND MEANINGFULLY, ESPECIALLY WHEN WE WANT OUR EUROPEAN FRIENDS TO PARTICIPATE IN A JOINT ENDEAVOR OR TO SUPPORT U.S. POLICY. EUROPEANS PLACE ESPECIALLY HIGH VALUE ON CONSULTATIONS PRIOR TO THE FORMATION OF U.S. POLICY.

POLICY ISSUES: SPECIFIC

16. THE BELGIAN ECONOMY CONTINUES TO BE PLAGUED BY SERIOUS UNEMPLOYMENT, UNDER UTILIZATION OF INDUSTRIAL CAPACITY, AND INFLATION. THE BELGIANS COUNT ON THE UNITED STATES TO LEAD THE INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES OUT OF THE PRESENT PROLONGED SLUMP. BELGIUM, WITH A RELATIVELY SMALL ECONOMY AND EXPORTING ABOUT HALF OF ITS GNP, FEELS INCAPABLE OF ACTING ALONE. IN BELGIAN EYES, THE PACE MUST BE SET BY THE UNITED STATES, WORKING WITH OTHER LARGE AND STRONG COUNTRIES SUCH AS GERMANY AND JAPAN. MULTINATIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON MACRO-ECONOMIC POLICIES ARE CONSIDERED ESSENTIAL BY BELGIAN POLICYMAKERS. BELGIUM STRONGLY SUPPORTS EC PARTICIPATION IN ECONOMIC SUMMIT MEETINGS.

17. BELGIAN PARTICIPATION IN COMMON PROJECTS OF IMPORTANCE TO THE UNITED STATES IS LIKELY TO BE MORE FORTHCOMING WHEN THE RECESSION HAS BEEN BURIED BY GENERAL ECONOMIC GROWTH. THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE WITH REGARD TO FURTHER INCREASE IN DEFENSE EXPENDITURES AND BELGIAN PARTICIPATION IN PARTICULAR DEFENSE PROGRAMS SUCH AS THE AIRBORNE EARLY WARNING SYSTEM. BELGIAN DEFENSE EXPENDITURES, LOW AS A PERCENTAGE OF GNP, HAVE BEEN INCREASED MODESTLY OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS. BELGIUM IS UNLIKELY TO CONTINUE TO INCREASE ITS DEFENSE EXPENDITURES EVEN BY SMALL AMOUNTS IN THE FACE OF CONTINUED RECESSION AND LOW TAX RECEIPTS.

CONFIDENTIAL

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CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BRUSSE 03105 03 OF 04 301353Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 SS-15 SP-02 PER-01 SIG-01
A-01 MMO-01 EB-08 SCA-01 IO-13 INR-07 PM-04 CU-02
AGRE-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 FEAE-00
NSC-05 TRSE-00 USIA-06 /092 W
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9459
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AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BERN
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
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AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY VIENNA
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 4 BRUSSELS 03105

18. BELGIUM FAVORS STANDARDIZATION AND INTEROPERABILITY
OF ARMS AND EQUIPMENT AMONG NATO ALLIES. HOWEVER,
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BRUSSE 03105 03 OF 04 301353Z

BELGIANS WANT TO AVOID STANDARDIZATION PRIMARILY ON AMERICAN WEAPONS. THEY THINK IT WOULD BE HEALTHY FOR THE ALLIANCE TO DEVELOP A EUROPEAN ARMS PRODUCTION CAPABILITY SO THAT A GENUINE TWO-WAY STREET COULD BE CONSTRUCTED. THUS, BELGIANS WILL CONTINUE TO STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF THE EUROPEAN PROGRAM GROUP TO SUPPLEMENT STANDARDIZATION AND INTEROPERABILITY EFFORTS IN NATO. BELGIUM WILL WATCH CLOSELY THE DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICAN POLICY AND PRACTICE.

19. THE BELGIAN ATTITUDE TOWARD THE MULTILATERAL TRADE NEGOTIATIONS IS CONDITIONED IN LARGE MEASURE BY THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY. ANY U.S. EFFORT TO CONCLUDE THE TRADE NEGOTIATIONS BEFORE A GENERAL REVIVAL OF EUROPEAN ECONOMIES WILL RESULT IN SMALL CUTS IN TRADE BARRIERS AND MANY EXCEPTIONS. UNDUE HASTE ON OUR PART WILL ALSO PUT US IN THE POSITION OF BEING DEMANDEUR AND WILL EXPOSE US TO EUROPEAN INSISTENCE THAT WE MAKE THE CONCESSIONS NECESSARY TO REACH AGREEMENT. THE TRADITIONAL BELGIAN POLICY FAVORING REDUCTIONS IN INDUSTRIAL TRADE BARRIERS WILL BE TEMPERED ALSO BY THEIR STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS IN STEEL, GLASS, TEXTILE, AND POSSIBLY OTHER SECTORS. THE GOVERNMENT IS ALSO WORRIED GENERALLY ABOUT THE LONG-TERM COMPETITIVENESS OF BELGIAN INDUSTRY, WITH MUCH ANTIQUATED PLANT AND EQUIPMENT AND LOW-LEVELS OF PROFIT AND INVESTMENT. IN AGRICULTURE, THE BELGIANS WILL RESIST ANY AMERICAN EFFORT FUNDAMENTALLY TO ALTER THE COMMUNITY'S COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY. IMPROVEMENTS ON THE MARGIN MAY BE NEGOTIABLE, HOWEVER, IF WE WORK WITH AND NOT AGAINST THOSE WITHIN THE COMMUNITY WHO ALSO WANT TO MODIFY THE PRESENT POLICY.

20. BELGIUM ADVOCATES STABLE, PREDICTABLE FOREIGN EXCHANGE RATES. IT VALUES HIGHLY ITS "SNAKE" LINKAGE TO THE DM, BOTH AS A MEANS TO REDUCE FOREIGN EXCHANGE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BRUSSE 03105 03 OF 04 301353Z

FLUCTUATIONS AND AS A STEP TOWARD HARMONIZATION OF MONETARY POLICY IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY. BEYOND THE SNAKE, BELGIUM FAVORS TIGHTER MANAGEMENT OF FLOATING RATES BY THE MAJOR POWERS AND THE IMF.

21. BELGIUM WILL CONTINUE TO WORK CLOSELY WITH THE U.S. IN THE IEA. ORGANIZATIONALLY, BELGIUM'S MAIN CONCERNS WILL BE TO FIND WAYS TO DEVELOP AN EC ENERGY POLICY PARALLELING THE BROADER EFFORTS IN THE IEA AND TO ASSOCIATE FRANCE MORE CLOSELY WITH BOTH EURATOM AND THE IEA. SUBSTANTIVELY, BELGIUM CAN BE EXPECTED TO PARTICIPATE IN COMMON ACTION TO LESSEN DEPENDENCE ON

IMPORTED OIL. BELGIUM IS COMMITTED TO AN EXPANSION OF ITS NUCLEAR POWER INFRASTRUCTURE.

2. BELGIUM SYMPATHIZES WITH THE U.S. DESIRE TO BLOCK THE EXPORT OF NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY AND EQUIPMENT CAPABLE OF PRODUCING WEAPONS GRADE MATERIAL. HOWEVER, BELGIANS ARE CONCERNED THAT THE U.S. AND OTHER MAJOR POWERS MAY AGREE TO RESTRICTIONS ON EXPORT OF NUCLEAR MATERIALS, TECHNOLOGY, AND EQUIPMENT THAT WILL BE TO BELGIUM'S DISADVANTAGE.

23. BELGIUM HAS NOT BEEN AN INNOVATOR IN THE NORTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE AND IS UNLIKELY TO BECOME ONE. LOCATED ECONOMICALLY AND IDEOLOGICALLY BETWEEN THE DUTCH AND GERMAN POSITIONS, THE BELGIANS HAVE CHOSEN TO PLAY THE ROLE OF MODERATOR IN EC COUNCILS. BELGIUM PARTICIPATES IN THE DELIBERATIONS OF THE LIBERAL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES BUT IS ACTUALLY NOT MUCH MORE FORTHCOMING THAN GERMANY ON MOST ISSUES. THE BELGIANS REGARD THE NORTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE PRIMARILY AS A POLITICAL HOLDING ACTION. NONETHELESS, THEY PROBABLY WILL GO ALONG WITH WHATEVER CONSENSUS IS REACHED AMONG THE INDUSTRIALIZED NATIONS TO ASSIST THE LESS-DEVELOPED COUNTRIES.
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 BRUSSE 03105 03 OF 04 301353Z

24. BELGIUM HAS HISTORICALLY BEEN CONCERNED ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. THE BELGIANS WELCOME THE CURRENT U.S. EMPHASIS ON HUMAN RIGHTS. HOWEVER, THEY ARE CONCERNED THAT THE PROPER BALANCE BE STRUCK BETWEEN HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS AND OTHER POLICY OBJECTIVES. THEY WOULD NOT LIKE US TO PUSH HUMAN RIHTS TO THE POINT, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT WE WOULD EITHER SLIDE BACK INTO THE COLD WAR WITH THE SOVIET UNION OR ENCOURAGE EASTERN EUROPEANS TO MAKE DEMANDS THAT WOULD PROVOKE ARMED SOVIET INTERVENTION.

25. ALTHOUGH THE BELGIANS REALIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SALT AND MBFR NEGOTIATIONS, THERE IS LITTLE INCLINATION HERE TO CONCLUDE EITHER MERELY FOR THE SAKE OF REACHING AGREEMENT. BELGIUM FAVORS BALANCED REDUCTIONS IN BOTH STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL ARMS, PROVIDED THAT THE DETERRENT IS NOT LESSEMED AND THE RELATIVE STRENGTH OF NATO FORCES IS NOT REDUCED.

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BRUSSE 03105 04 OF 04 301636Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 SS-15 SP-02 PER-01 SIG-01
A-01 MMO-01 EB-08 SCA-01 IO-13 INR-07 PM-04 CU-02
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AMEMBASSY VIENNA
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS
USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 4 OF 4 BRUSSELS 03105

26. BELGIUM MAY BE A STUMBLING BLOCK AS WE DEVELOP
CONCRETE POLICIES TO CONTROL EXPORTS OF CONVENTIONAL
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BRUSSE 03105 04 OF 04 301636Z

ARMS. BELGIUM HAS A LONG-ESTABLISHED, HIGH-QUALITY
ARMS INDUSTRY AND IS A MAJOR EXPORTER OF CONVENTIONAL
WEAPONS. BELGIANS PROBABLY WOULD RESIST ANY AMERICAN
EFFORT TO PERSUADE THEM UNILATERALLY TO LIMIT EXPORTS

OF ARMS. THEY WOULD ARGUE THAT IF THEY DID NOT EXPORT WEAPONS, SOMEONE ELSE WOULD. HOWEVER, AS THE BELGIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY IS AWARE OF THE POTENTIAL DANGERS TO INTERNATIONAL STABILITY OF UNRESTRICTED EXPORTS OF ARMS, I THINK BELGIUM PROBABLY WOULD BE MORE RESPONSIVE TO AN AMERICAN INITIATIVE IN A MULTILATERAL CONTEXT. CERTAINLY THE HAND OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY WOULD BE STRENGTHENED BY NEGOTIATORS TO ARRIVE AT AN INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT LIMITING THE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH ARMS COULD BE EXPORTED.

27. A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF BELGIANS REMAIN IN ZAIRE AND THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT IS INTERESTED IN HAVING A STABLE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CLIMATE THERE. TO ATTAIN THESE OBJECTIVES BELGIUM WILL COOPERATE WITH THE UNITED STATES TO A LIMITED DEGREE. HOWEVER, BELGIUM WILL NEITHER WISH TO GET OUT IN FRONT NOR PARTICIPATE WITH US BEYOND A CERTAIN POINT. IN MY JUDGMENT, BELGIUM WILL STOP WELL SHORT OF SENDING MILITARY ADVISORS FOR TROOPS IN THE FIELD OR PROVIDING HEAVY MILITARY EQUIPMENT. PUBLIC QUESTIONS HAVE ALREADY BEEN RAISED ABOUT THE RECENT SHIPMENTS OF SMALL ARMS AND AMMUNITION TO HELP MOBUTU WITHSTAND THE INCURSION INTO THE SHABA DISTRICT.

28. BELGIUM WILL CONTINUE TO APPROACH EUCOM RELOCATION CAUTIOUSLY. BELGIANS WOULD NOT WISH TO OPEN A PUBLIC DEBATE ON THE ADVISABILITY OF HAVING EUCOM ON BELGIAN SOIL UNLESS IT WERE CLEAR TO THEM THAT THE MOVE WOULD HAVE GENUINE STRATEGIC ADVANTAGES. THE FOREIGN MINISTRY FEARS THAT DISCUSSION IN PARLIAMENT WOULD GIVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR MISCHIEF TO ANTI-MILITARY, ANTI-NATO

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BRUSSE 03105 04 OF 04 301636Z

GROUPS. ANY PUBLIC DISPUTE RAISED BY THESE GROUPS COULD BE EXPLOITED BY OPPOSITION PARTIES. THEY GOVERNMENT'S POSITION WOULD BE LESS VULNERABLE IF, AFTER THE APRIL 17 ELECTIONS, A COALITION OF THE TWO MAJOR PARTIES IS FORMED. THEN THE PROBLEM MAY BE MANAGEABLE IF WE APPROACH THE BELGIANS WITH UNDERSTANDING AND SOLID STRATEGIC ARGUMENTS.

29. LAST BUT NOT LEAST, WE CAN EXPECT THE BELGIANS TO STEP UP THEIR EFFORTS TO GET A SECOND LANDING POINT FOR SABENA. BELGIANS FEEL THAT THEY HAVE BEEN DISCRIMINATED AGAINST AND POINT TO THE NUMBER OF LANDING POINTS THE U.S. HAS GIVEN THE NETHERLANDS AND OTHER SMALL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES. THUS FAR THIS QUESTION HAS NOT ADVERSELY AFFECTED BELGIUM'S WILLINGNESS TO COOPERATE WITH US ON ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO US. BUT IF,

FOLLOWING ECONOMIC REVIVAL, THE U.S. DOES NOT RESTORE THE BALANCE OF EQUITY, BELGIUM MAY BECOME MORE DIFFICULT TO DEAL WITH.

30. THERE ARE THREE OPERATIONAL PROBLEMS THAT, WHILE NOT POLICY ISSUES, WILL REQUIRE CAREFUL MANAGING IN THE COMING YEAR.

--THE BELGIAN DEFENSE MINISTER DOES NOT HAVE THE FUNDS TO HANDLE THE FY 78-81 HUMP IN PAYMENTS FOR THE F-16 COMBAT FIGHTER AND WILL BE ABLE TO SIGN THE FINAL LETTER OF OFFER ONLY IF THE U.S. CAN REDUCE THE PAYMENTS REQUIRED IN THESE YEARS.

--THE BELGIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY IS PREPARED TO WORK WITH US TO SPELL OUT IN ADVANCE STEPS TO BE TAKEN TO RECOVER STOLEN STRATEGIC ARMS BUT CONSIDERS IT NEITHER NECESSARY NOR DESIRABLE TO NEGOTIATE A GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT COVERING AGREEMENT.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 BRUSSE 03105 04 OF 04 301636Z

--AS ADDITIONAL AMERICAN FIRMS PULL OUT OF BELGIUM, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THEY MEET ALL OF THEIR OBLIGATIONS UNDER BELGIAN LAW; OTHERWISE AN ANTI-AMERICAN CLIMATE COULD DEVELOP THAT WOULD PREJUDICE OTHER U.S. OBJECTIVES HERE.

31. IN SUM, BELGIANS ARE FUNDAMENTALLY WELL-DISPOSED TOWARD THE UNITED STATES AND GENERALLY CAN BE COUNTED ON TO SUPPORT OUR POLICIES--ESPECIALLY IF WE TAKE CARE TO CONSULT WITH THEM IN ADVANCE OF MAKING POLICY DECISIONS AND TAKE THEIR PREOCCUPATIONS INTO CONSIDERATION. RENNER

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Handling Restrictions: n/a
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ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t1977038/aaaaagtk.tel
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Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
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Original Previous Classification: n/a
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SAS ID: 3169219
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TAGS: AMGT, PFOR, PARM, US, BE
To: STATE
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